

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - COMMUNITY GUIDANCE SUMMARY**

This document summarizes the public input most directly related to the Economic Development chapter that has been received so far. As noted below, information from the second and third rounds of public engagement will be added later. Through the survey and the first round of public engagement, one of the public engagement themes that most directly relates to this chapter is: “Respondents support economic development that results in recruitment of businesses with higher paying jobs as one way of making the community more economically resilient and appealing to younger professionals. While tourism is a major economic driver in the County, it should be balanced with other employment and industries.”

### **I. Scientific Survey: 2019 Citizen Survey**

- Respondents were asked about County efforts to attract jobs and new businesses. 88.1% found this service to be very important or somewhat important, while 11.9% found this service to be somewhat unimportant/not important at all. With regard to respondent satisfaction with these efforts, 68.3% were very or somewhat satisfied, and 31.7% were somewhat or very unsatisfied. This difference between the importance placed on the service and the satisfaction with provision of the service is the “satisfaction gap” - for efforts to attract jobs and new businesses; the satisfaction gap was about 20%, which ranks as the third highest gap documented within the survey.
- Amount of Development: Respondents were asked to rate the amount of office, retail, and industrial development.
  - Regarding office development, 5% found the County had too little, whereas the remaining 95% were split between believing the amount of office development was about right (67%) and too high (28%).
  - For retail development, 6% found the County had too little, while the remaining 94% were split between believing the amount of retail development was about right (45%) and too high (49%).
  - Regarding industrial development, 20% of respondents thought the amount of industrial development was too low, while the remaining 80% were split between believing the amount of industrial development was about right (62%) and too high (18%). As a comparison with the results of this same question in 2014, 49% of respondents said the level was about right.
- Open-Ended Question Responses: Responses to the three open-ended questions can be found here, on pages E-1 through E-106:  
<https://jamescitycountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/22801/2019-Final-Survey-Report-with-Appendices-PDF>. The three open-ended questions were:
  - (1) Over the next 20 years, what are the most important land uses and activities that should occur in Rural Lands in James City County?
  - (2) What do you like about living in the County?
  - (3) What would you like to see change in the County in the future?

For the Economic Development chapter, responses to the third question were most related. A portion of the survey summary document for this third question (page 32) states “One theme does stand out: stop development and growth. Many comments pertained to there being too much residential development and too much retail development, when there are empty stores and malls. A number of respondents said essentially that they like how things are and don’t want any change. But it is clear that respondents differ on these issues. For instance, while some respondents oppose bringing in a big box store, other respondents said that was just what is needed. Some want all growth to stop, while others said the County should bring in more jobs, small businesses, and light industry.”

## **II. First Round Community Engagement: Summit on the Future**

As a follow-up to the survey, the County hosted the Engage 2045 Summit on the Future in the fall of 2019 to engage with citizens to determine their vision for the future of the County. During the polling portion of the Summit and online polling that continued weeks after, 88% of the respondents said it was somewhat or very important for the County to do more to expand the local economy by attracting higher paying jobs. When asked about their concern regarding retail space, the public’s highest ranked concern was that new retail space would replace open space, rural land or natural habitat. The Summit and online respondents also indicated that they were concerned new retail space would increase the overall retail vacancy within the County.

When asked what areas citizens would like to change and how as part of the Summit’s interactive mapping exercise (which was made available online for participation afterwards), many respondents gave similar responses relating to economic development. In no particular order, these responses include: a focus on redeveloping older commercial spaces, encouraging infill development rather than greenfield development, the importance of retaining “small-town” community character, and the challenge of retail vacancy, and store turnover.

Participants were also provided an opportunity to share their “Big Ideas.” Some responses supported specific efforts to attract businesses, varying from large tech companies to small local businesses. Other responses supported specific institutions or businesses including libraries, medical facilities, airports, convention centers, hotels, amphitheaters, and wholesale clubs.

## **III. Listening Forum**

The Community Participation Team hosted a Listening Forum for interested groups on May 4, 2020. Presentations from the groups that participated covered a range of topics and issues. Listening Forum presentation materials can be viewed here: <https://jamescitycountyva.gov/3748/Listening-Forums>. A summary, which has been approved by the presenting groups, can be viewed here: <https://jamescitycountyva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25139/Attachment-04-CPT-Listening-Forum-Summary-Final-Amended-06292020-PDF>.

## **IV. Second Round Community Engagement: Exploring our Alternative Futures Assembly and Online Questionnaires**

This effort is on-going and relevant feedback will be included here in the future.

## **V. Third Round Community Engagement: TBD**

This effort is tentatively planned for December and relevant feedback will be included here in the future.